

Naval War College Review

Volume 33
Number 2 *March-April*

Article 11

1980

Strategic Implications of the All-Volunteer Force

Francis P. Butler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Butler, Francis P. (1980) "Strategic Implications of the All-Volunteer Force," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 2 , Article 11.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol33/iss2/11>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

Coffey, Kenneth J. *Strategic Implications of the All-Volunteer Force: The Conventional Defense of Central Europe*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979. 210pp.

This effort is excellent—comprehensive and accurate. The author provides another piece to the puzzling question of how a democratic republic provides itself the best and most credible defense at a cost, physically and spiritually, that the citizenry is willing to bear. Though the strategic situation and the American view regarding conscription has changed somewhat since publication, the study, which focuses on the AVF's capability to provide a conventional defense for Central Europe, is a valid benchmark for new assessments.

Coffey first traces early opposition to the war in Vietnam and the draft. The earliest American military traditions established by the Colonials were to fight only defensive wars with every able-bodied man obligated to serve. Until the citizen army became a professional standing army these traditions remained an integral aspect of the American way. The Vietnam era opposition was to a war unrelated to the nation's defense, and fought with forces that reflected the inequitable nature of the draft. The author devotes one chapter to draft reform and follows it with a chapter on the political realities that forced the abandonment of the Selective Service system.

The remainder of the book examines the formation and the early years of the All-Volunteer Force, and its effect on total force requirements for the conventional defense of Central Europe. The author treats thoroughly every important aspect of this problem. He is especially lucid in calling for reconciliation between America's strategic force capabilities and its commitments, but he did not know of the imminent formation of a Rapid Deployment Force.

This book inspires one now to explore new directions. NATO has contained the Soviet threat to the areas directed by its Charter. As the realities of international power realignments became evident, coincident reassessments of the Soviet threat did not occur. This fact and the perception of the United States diminished in power and desire to defend outside of the threat regions identified with NATO interests have emboldened the Soviet Union to threaten other areas of the world. The Soviet Union intends to exacerbate the West's and Japan's energy dependence on the Middle East, and encircle China to its southwest and southeast with regimes unfriendly to it. The Soviet Union perceives China to be its primary adversary, both as a potential military aggressor and ideological rival. Recent Soviet actions in the Middle East and Southwest Asia represent either a progressive step in spreading its influence and ideology or an initial stage in an effort to curb its failure to widen its influence and ideology.

These possibilities, tied closely to America's reduced military capability, return this nation to its tradition to fight only defensive wars. There is no reason not to return to another tradition. Kenneth Coffey explores the alternatives to the AVF, including some based not on compulsion as the author asserts, but on universal obligation. Chapter IX should be read with care.

FRANCIS P. BUTLER
Major, U.S. Army

Dengler, Dieter. *Escape from Laos*. San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1979, 211pp.

Every war has its POWs, prison camps, and escape stories. Dieter Dengler's incredible story, *Escape from Laos*, will certainly take a prominent place in representing the Vietnam war.